

## "KITTY CLOVER."

By Mrs. CARRIE D. BEEBE.

Willard Ross sat in the parlor of his uncle's farm-house, lazily turning the leaves of a photograph-album.

"Who is this, aunt Mary?" he asked.

"Oh! that's Kitty Clover!"

"Kitty Clover?"

"Yes; or Kitty Armstead, rather; my niece. She spent a month here last summer, and your uncle David thought so much of her that he asked for her picture. He always calls her Kitty Clover, because she thinks clover-blossoms are as pretty."

"Where does she live?"

"In New York."

"Tell me about her, won't you?"

"She is my sister's youngest child, and her father is dead; her sisters are all married, and she lives alone with her mother."

"She is quite a belle, I suppose."

"Well, I hardly think so; she isn't rich enough for that."

"Is she poor, then?"

"No, not that exactly, either. Her father was a tea-merchant, who died a few years ago, leaving a small property. Kitty and her mother have enough to rent a neat second-story house, and feed and clothe themselves comfortably. She is coming up again this summer, and I am very glad, for I know you will like each other, and it will be pleasant for both."

"How old is she?"

"Eighteen. Just the age for you. A man, with your wealth and position in society, ought to be married."

"The truth is, aunt Mary, that all the marriageable young ladies have turned fortune-hunters. If I could meet your niece without her knowing that I was rich, it would suit me well, for I like her face exceedingly."

"Now don't be so ridiculous, Willard! Kitty might, with just as much propriety, say that she was afraid you would fall in love with her on account of her beauty, and insist upon wearing a mask. You are not in search of a rich wife, for the very excellent reason that you are wealthy yourself. But the woman you marry must possess beauty, or its equivalent; and I think it is but fair that she should receive something in exchange."

"So you think I have nothing but wealth to recommend me, aunt Mary?"

"Yes, I think you have an abundance of self-conceit."

"Now that is unkind. You are angry with me for suspecting your niece of mercenary motives. Do be a good, kind aunt Mary, and help me in this."

"I cannot say that I approve of deception under any circumstances."

Still, if you really desire it, you might pretend to be a distant cousin, assisting your uncle through the summer work, and treated as one of the family on account of the relationship."

"That is just the thing; for I am so brown already that I could easily pass for a farmer."

That very night Mrs. Ross received a letter from Kitty, saying that she would be there the next day; and Willard hastily prepared himself, and gave instructions to the servants.

So the next evening when his uncle David rode back from the village, with Kitty in the carriage, Willard was coming from work with the men.

He was more than surprised at Kitty's beauty, even after having seen her photograph. Her bright, waving golden hair; her fair complexion; and her brown, sparkling eyes, that seemed overflowing with mischief, far exceeded in loveliness all he had imagined. But, unfortunately, Kitty's attention was directed to household affairs for the first few days, and she took little or no notice of him.

But one day she went out into the hay-field with her uncle, when Willard was on the mowing-machine mowing. The horses were quite spirited, and coming suddenly to a hollow in the ground, he was thrown off the mower, spraining his ankle slightly.

This proved sufficiently painful to keep him in the house for the next few days, and Kitty and he became the best of friends. She read to him, talked and sang to him; and as they were both disposed to be argumentative, aunt Mary was often amused by their discussions.

"How did you acquire such a finished education, and a thorough knowledge of books?" asked Kitty, one day.

"Ah, Miss Kitty! my father was once wealthy, and no pains was spared with my education."

"Why don't you use it to some advantage?"

"Perhaps I may do so some day, though, to tell the truth, I believe I am rather indolent."

One morning, as soon as the dew was off the grass, Kitty ran out and gathered flowers for the vases. She sat down on a low chair in the parlor to arrange them.

Willard watched her, thinking what a lovely picture she made in her white morning-dress, and her hair more like gold than ever. He asked for a nosegay.

"Certainly," she said. Taking a white rose, she surrounded it with forget-me-nots, added some sweet elysium, and tying fragrant geranium-leaves around the whole, she placed it in his hand.

"It is beautiful and sweet—it is like yourself," he said, enthusiastically.

Kitty blushed hotly, but made no reply.

"Let me see what messages they bring me. 'I am worthy of you! 'True love!' 'Worth beyond beauty!' and 'Preference!'"

"Ah, sir! that is unfair! I selected the flowers for their beauty and fragrance, not for their meaning." And Kitty's proud, little lips curled; she tried to appear angry and disdainful, but she looked more perplexed than either; for the white lids, with their golden fringes, drooped over her brown eyes, and her slender fingers fluttered nervously with the flowers in her lap. Hastily placing them in the vases, she escaped to her room, and did not make her appearance

until dinner-time. Willard watched throughout the meal to catch her eye, and was at last rewarded with a timid, fluttering glance. He sent back such a look of entreaty, mingled with penitence, that her cheeks grew very rosy, though she did not deign to notice him further.

She did not appear in the parlor after dinner; and he began to fear she was seriously offended.

"I wish, most ardently, that I had never assumed this silly disguise," he said; "it places me in a false position, that is often uncomfortable; and I verily believe that this provoking sprain, which I thought might possibly excite her sympathy, has only caused me to appear more worthless and inactive in her eyes."

He heard her light step on the stairs, but she went directly out on the porch. He called her, and she came in, looking a little frightened.

"Miss Kitty, I see I have offended you. I did not mean it. Pray, forgive me."

His tone was so humble that she gave him her hand in a pretty, graceful way. He took it in both his, and kissed it repeatedly, and passionately.

She flushed angrily.

"I cannot help it!" he cried. "Oh, Kitty! I love you!"

"But I don't love you, sir!" she said, half vexed, half saucy.

"But you are not angry with me for loving you?"

"No. I want to be your friend, and I don't want you to make love to me."

"Please, don't leave me alone; my ankle is very painful—aren't you sorry?"

" Yes, indeed!"

" Won't you read to me, then?"

" Certainly! What would you like?"

"The Princess."

"But I am tired of that."

" I can never tire of it—but please yourself."

"I will read it to you."

She took the book and sat down, the blue and gold making her fair hand whiter by contrast. Her tones were silvery sweet; her face flushed softly as she read, and, at the last words of the prince, her voice trembled slightly. She closed her eyes and sat slowly rocking to and fro, her hair floating out in the sunshine that came through a western window.

He watched her, thinking how beautiful she was, and how he loved her; and yet he dared not speak after what had passed.

But a few evenings subsequently, his love proved stronger than his judgment; and as they sat in the twilight shadows, he told her that old but bewitching story, and she grew paler as she listened, and for answer said,

"Willard! Willard! you must not love me, for I cannot be your wife!"

"Kitty, do you refuse me because I am poor?"

"Oh, no! but you lack energy, ambition. If you were rich, there might be more excuse for your idleness; but a man with your health, education and talents, should never settle down to a second-rate day laborer."

"Aunt Mary has betrayed me!"

"What?"

"Kitty!" he said, springing up, "do you know who I am?"

"No; but I believe you are a lunatic!"

"I am not; but I will acknowledge that I have been a fool! Kitty, my name is not Smith; I am Willard Ross!"

She started in surprise. But recovering herself, in a moment, she said, rather coldly.

"I thought Willard Ross was a wealthy lawyer, residing in the city."

"I am he."

"But why did you take the name of Smith?"

"I knew you were coming, and I thought—"

"Oh, I see! You thought I would fall in love with your money? That was extremely sagacious on your part."

"No matter what I thought. I am sorry that I assumed the disguise. I love you: how much, words fail to tell. Oh! be mine, Kitty?"

As he spoke he tried to take her hand, but she drew back.

"No, sir," she said; "not after such deception. Mr. Ross, good-night."

Willard flew to aunt Mary for comfort. She soothed him as best she could, assuring him that she believed Kitty did love him, and had only refused him because her pride was wounded. Still, he spent a sleepless night. Kitty, too, looked pale at breakfast; Willard thought so, at least; and it gave him a forlorn hope. But she avoided him that day, and the days that followed. Yet she glided about the house as silently as a spirit, with neither songs nor laughter on her lips.

Willard watched her with an aching heart, thinking that he could almost give up the hope of winning her love, if it would make her the mirthful, happy Kitty once more.

"If I had only taken aunt Mary's advice at first," he said. "I'm sure I don't blame the dear child for refusing such a worthless mortal as I represented myself to be."

One afternoon he rode to the village for the mail. Kitty had been out for a short walk, and came in, complaining of headache.

"Lie down on the sofa, dear," cried aunt Mary; "there is no one to disturb you, and, perhaps, you may fall asleep."

She brought a pillow, and Kitty laid her tired little head upon it, and, as everything was quiet, she was soon away in the land of dreams.

Aunt Mary met Willard at the door on his return. "Kitty is asleep in the parlor," she said; "go in, if you like, but don't disturb her."

So he went in softly, and drawing an ottoman near the sofa, he sat down beside her. She looked very lovely in her graceful slumber; attired in white, her hair fastened away from her forehead with a pale-blue ribbon, and the tip of a tiny blue slipper peeping out



beneath her dress. Her fair hands lay lightly, "palm to palm;" but his heart reproached him when he saw how pale her face had grown. He dared not kiss her, but took a curl of her hair softly in his hands, pressing it to his lips silently.

By-and-by she began to murmur in her sleep. Willard started, when he heard his own name spoken softly and lovingly. His heart gave a great bound of joy. But he was a man of honor, and remembered that he had no right to be there, listening. So he rose noiselessly to leave the room.

The movement, however, awoke her, at least partially. She looked up, and met his eyes, gazing fondly on her. She was still only half conscious: at least she had not yet had time to remember her pride; and she smiled in return, and held out her hand.

Willard seized it, covered it with kisses, and fell on his knees beside her.

The crimson blood rushed over the cheeks, the brow, even the fair cheeks of Kitty; for suddenly she recalled everything, and especially her pride.

But it was too late. Willard held fast to her hand.

"Don't be cruel again, darling," he began.

Kitty burst into tears. But when he drew her head to his shoulder, she resisted no longer. She hid her face, but he kissed her hair.

"You love me, don't you, Kitty?" he whispered, at last.

She looked up, shyly; their lips met: and Kitty was won.



